



Uplift Inc.

A 501 (c) 3 Idea Incubator Reconstructing Communities One Idea at a Time

Testimony in support of House Bill 5381, 5382

January 29, 2008

Uplift, Inc. supports House Bill 5381, 5382 to address truancy and parental responsibility with 3 amendments – specific timeline for parent notification, parental educational classes be required prior to prosecution and referral to schools that specifically cater to dropouts.

According to Claire Raines, author of *Connecting Generations: The Sourcebook*, Millennials, those ages 13 to 23 years of age, prefer to learn using teamwork, technology, structure, entertainment and experiential activities. These students are considered technical natives having been raised with cell phones, DVDs, and video game consoles since their birth. They are naturally technical savvy.

Millennials can be found manipulating video games — every day of the week for hours. This manipulation has developed the skill of self challenge and self learning. Their curiosity, intensity and seriousness about their video games is refreshing. This generation should be leading Michigan to attract high tech jobs. However, these young people are draining the State of Michigan's budget as they have the highest propensity to drop out of high school and commit crimes or move onto welfare rolls.

Uplift, Inc. is a 501(c)3 Idea Incubator that began November 1997 with a mission of reconstructing communities one idea at a time. Uplift, Inc. is headed by Ida Byrd-Hill, a former financial planner and graduate from the University of Michigan with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics. Our latest project was the creation and management of Hustle & TECHknow Preparatory High School. Hustle & TECHknow is an onsite “CYBER SCHOOLS” for students, ages 16-19, who have dropped out of traditional high school. Most of these students are participants in the juvenile justice system.

We discovered these students are extremely bright, but disengaged from the traditional high school experience. The traditional high school is hostile, impersonal and demeaning for these students. These students are seen as failures. They need an environment that encourages them to move beyond their failures to success. They need an environment that removes them from their depressing living environments.

Hustle & TECHknow Preparatory High School was born, September, 2006, upon execution of a contract between Uplift, Inc., and Detroit Public Schools to assist dropout students and juvenile delinquents students complete the 230 academic hours required by the State of Michigan for graduation. Hustle & TECHknow Preparatory High School was located at the Compuware Headquarters in Downtown Detroit with the hopes that exposure to the world of technology combined with online curriculum would prepare students for the burgeoning industry of Business Information Processing.

Business Information Processing is a 300 billion dollar industry anchored by customer service call centers, financial and human resources processing centers. Jobs in this industry require individuals with the ability to read from a computer screen, manipulate Microsoft Office, and answer telephone calls for 6 to 8 hours a day.

Phoenix, Arizona attracted 200 call centers generating 100,000 jobs over a 10 year period. These jobs earn \$20,000 to \$40,000 per year and do not require a college degree. Companies who moved call centers to Phoenix— American Express 7000 jobs, Discover Financial 3700 jobs, Bank of America 2200 jobs. JP Morgan 2000 jobs, USAA 2000 jobs, The Vanguard Group 1500 jobs, Charles Schwab 1337 jobs.

Hustle & TECHknow Preparatory High School provided core curriculum: English, Math, Science, and Social Studies online utilizing Michigan Virtual High School and technology classes. Students sat behind a computer screen for 5 to 6 hours a day. This skill is necessary to expand the technology industry here in the State of Michigan.

Here is the statistical information for 2006—2007.

Student Body Makeup	93 Students	70 Boys, 23 Girls,	
Ethnic Makeup	1% Asian	2% Caucasian	96% African American
Residential Makeup	91% Detroit Residents	9% Suburban Residents	
Special Needs Makeup	30 % Adjudicated Youth	81% Economically disadvantaged	
Staff	4 Teachers	1 Administrator	1 Assistant

During this first year, we discovered most schools only provide college preparatory curriculum for the top 20% of the class which did not include our students. We decided to become an all college preparatory school preaching every student has the ability to attend at least community college using the Tuition Incentive Plan (TIP).

Here are our successes:

- 80% Graduation Rate
- Entire Graduating class went to college
- Collective Lexile Reading Level Increased 4.2 to 7.8
- Colletive Grade Point Average moved from .738 E-average to 2.13 C-average
- Business Protocol/Leadership Development Class completed by all students
- Satisfactory completion of Algebra I, Geometry or Trigonometry
- Entry into Oracle Thinkquest website design contest. *(Three teams)*
- Explorations & Exposures program launched. Trips to local cultural areas, The Color Purple in Chicago.
- Three Computer labs equipped with a computer for each student Use of 2 Compuware computer labs
- Automation Alley Educational Program of the Year 2007
- Three semifinalists into the National Vocabulary Citywide Championship
- Authorized as a local CISCO networking Academy
- Establishment of Fencing team
- Implementation of Dress uniform

